International Seabed Authority ISBA/24/A/2

Assembly

Distr.: General
29 May 2018

Original: English

Twenty-fourth session
Kingston, 2–27 July 2018

Report of the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to the Assembly of the Authority pursuant to article 166, paragraph 4, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("the Convention"). The report provides information on the work of the Authority during the period from July 2017 to May 2018.

2. The Authority is an autonomous international organization established under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("the 1994 Agreement"). It is the organization through which States parties to the Convention, in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, in particular with a view to administering the resources of the Area.

3. The Authority has a number of other obligations under the Convention, including the obligation to distribute to States parties payments or contributions in kind derived from the exploitation of the resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, pursuant to article 82, paragraph 4, of the Convention.

4. Pending the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation, the Authority is to concentrate on the 11 areas of work listed in paragraph 5 of section 1 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement. The main focus is on the following areas:

(a) Supervisory functions with regard to contracts for exploration;

(b) Monitoring of trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities, including world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects;

(c) Study of the potential impact of mineral production from the Area on the economies of developing land-based producers of those minerals which are likely to be most seriously affected;

(d) Promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area through, among other things, a continuing programme of technical workshops, the dissemination of the results of such research and collaboration with contractors and the international scientific community;

(e) Monitoring the development of marine technology, in particular technology relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment;

(f) Information-gathering and the establishment and development of databases of scientific and technical information, with a view to obtaining a better understanding of the deep ocean environment;

(g) Development of a regulatory framework for the exploitation of the mineral resources of the Area, including applicable standards for the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

5. Following the request made by member States at the twenty-third session of the Authority, a draft strategic plan for the Authority for the 2019–2023 has been prepared and will be presented to the Assembly at its twenty-fourth session (see section III). The plan will provide direction for the development and implementation of the Authority's mandate under the Convention.

II. The Area

6. The Area is defined as the seabed and subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Establishing the exact geographic limits of the Area thus

depends on the delimitation of the limits of national jurisdiction, including the delineation of the continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the territorial sea. Pursuant to article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention, coastal States are obliged to give due publicity to charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points and, in the case of those indicating the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, to deposit a copy of such charts or lists with the Secretary-General of the Authority.

7. As at 31 May 2018, eight members of the Authority have deposited such charts and lists with the Secretary-General, namely: Australia, France (with respect to Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, New Caledonia and the Kerguelen islands), Ireland, Mauritius, Mexico, Niue, Pakistan and the Philippines.

8. The Secretary-General would urge all coastal States to deposit such charts or lists of coordinates as soon as possible after the establishment of the outer limit lines of their continental shelf, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

III. Implementation of article 82, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

9. The Authority has the responsibility, under article 82, paragraph 4, of the Convention, to distribute to States parties payments or contributions in kind derived from the exploitation of the resources of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. Among other things, this will require the Authority to develop equitable sharing criteria in respect of such payments and contributions.

10. In 2012, the Authority convened a workshop in Beijing on issues associated with the implementation of article 82. Participants in the workshop sought to draw up guidelines for the implementation of article 82 and the formulation of a model agreement between the Authority and an outer continental shelf State for receiving payments and distribution. One recommendation was to prepare a comparative study of key terms in article 82. To this end, the secretariat commissioned such a comparative study to assist in identifying possible paths for a practical approach and in developing the understanding of terminological issues in realistic settings.[1]

IV. Membership of the Authority

11. In accordance with article 156, paragraph 2, of the Convention, all States parties to the Convention are, ipso facto, members of the Authority. As at 31 May 2018, there were 168 parties to the Convention (167 States and the European Union) and thus 168 members of the Authority. On the same date, there were 150 parties to the 1994 Agreement. There were no further ratifications of or accessions to the Convention or the 1994 Agreement during the period covered by the present report.

12. There are therefore still 18 members of the Authority that became parties to the Convention before the adoption of the 1994 Agreement and that have yet to become parties to the Agreement. These are: Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mali, Marshall Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Sudan.

[1] International Seabed Authority, "ISA Technical Study No. 15: a study of key terms in article 82 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Area". Available at: https://www.isa.org.jm/sites/default/files/files/documents/ts15-web_0.pdf.

13. As provided by General Assembly resolution 48/263 and the 1994 Agreement itself, the provisions of the 1994 Agreement and Part XI of the Convention are to be interpreted and applied together as a single instrument. In the event of any inconsistency between the 1994 Agreement and Part XI of the Convention, the provisions of the 1994 Agreement would prevail. Although members of the Authority that are not parties to the 1994 Agreement necessarily participate in the work of the Authority under arrangements based on that Agreement, becoming a party to the 1994 Agreement would remove any incongruity that currently exists for those States.

14. Each year, the Secretary-General circulates a note to those members not yet party to the 1994 Agreement drawing their attention to the abovementioned provisions and encouraging them to become parties to the Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity. The last such note was dated 4 April 2018.

V. Permanent missions to the Authority

15. As at 31 May 2018, the following 25 States, in addition to the European Union, maintained permanent missions to the Authority: Algeria, Argentina, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, France, Gabon, Germany, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Spain and Trinidad and Tobago.

16. The Secretary-General also held briefing sessions for the permanent missions to the Authority in November 2017 and in February and June 2018 on the progress of the Authority's work and its Strategic Plan. Separate visits to the headquarters were made by the representatives of the European Union and China and a delegation from Côte d'Ivoire. Credentials were presented by the permanent representatives of Cuba, China, Japan, Italy, Nigeria and the Republic of Korea.

VI. Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority

17. The Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Seabed Authority was adopted by consensus at the fourth session of the Assembly, on 26 March 1998 (see ISBA/4/A/8). In accordance with article 18 of the Protocol, it entered into force 30 days after the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification, approval, acceptance or accession, on 31 March 2003.

18. The Protocol deals with the privileges and immunities of the Authority in relation to those matters which are not already covered in the Convention (articles 176 to 183) and is based substantially on articles I, II, IV, V, VI and VII of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 13 February 1946. The Protocol, inter alia, provides essential protection to representatives of members of the Authority who attend meetings of the Authority or who travel to and from those meetings. It also accords to experts on mission for the Authority such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions, while on mission, and for the time spent on journeys in connection with their mission.

19. During the reporting period, three States acceded to the Protocol: Burkina Faso, on 6 October 2017; Jordan, on 21 December 2017; and Georgia, on 4 April 2018. This brings the total number of parties to 46: Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Czechia, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea,

Guyana, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay. A further 11 States have signed the Protocol but have yet to ratify it: Bahamas, Côte d'Ivoire, Greece, Indonesia, Kenya, Malta, Namibia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

20. In an attempt to encourage other members of the Authority to become parties to the Protocol, on 2 March 2018, the Secretary-General circulated a note to that effect and drawing also the attention of members to paragraph 79 of General Assembly resolution 72/73, in which the Assembly calls upon States that have not done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Protocol. Members of the Authority that are not yet parties are strongly encouraged to take the necessary steps to become parties to the Protocol at their earliest convenience.

VII. Administrative matters

A. Secretariat

21. The secretariat is one of the principal organs of the Authority. In accordance with article 166 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Authority may require. The staff of the secretariat shall consist of such qualified scientific and technical and other personnel as may be required to fulfil the administrative functions of the Authority. The number of established posts in the secretariat as at January 2018 was 40 (22 Professional, 2 National and 16 General Service).

22. Some of the concerns regarding the resourcing, structure and coordination of the secretariat were reflected in the final report on the review conducted pursuant to article 154 of the Convention (see ISBA/23/A/3). During the twenty-third session and midway through the biennium, the Secretary-General announced certain changes to the organizational structure of the secretariat in order to address those concerns (see ISBA/23/A/4). The evolving organizational structure of the secretariat is reflected in the budget proposal for the financial period 2019–2020, with a focus on developing a culture of continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence. During the reporting period, two staff members retired, one separated and five vacant positions were filled, in addition to changes in temporary staffing arrangements.

B. Participation in the common system of the United Nations

23. The Authority applies the common system of salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the United Nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. Under the terms of the relationship agreement concluded with the United Nations in 1997, which entered into force on 26 November 1997, following its approval by the Assembly of the Authority (see ISBA/3/A/3) and the General Assembly of the United Nations (see resolution 52/27, annex), both organizations agree to apply common personnel standards, methods and arrangements. At its 139th meeting, on 27 July 2012, the Assembly of the Authority, acting upon a recommendation of the Council, decided that it would be desirable for the Authority to subscribe to the statute of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) with effect from January 2013 (see ISBA/18/A/7).

24. The secretariat was represented at the eighty-sixth session of ICSC, held at United Nations Headquarters in March 2018. The agenda included resolutions and

decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session relating to the work of ICSC, the conditions of service applicable to both categories of staff and post adjustment issues.

25. The Authority has implemented the revised ICSC compensation package (effective 1 October 2017) and in doing so availed itself of the opportunity to verify and record historical data, which also contributed to the successful implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and a more focused and accurate budget estimation on future staffing costs.

26. In Jamaica, the secretariat is an active participant in the work of the United Nations Country Team, the Operations Management Team and the Security Management Team, which include all the United Nations agencies present in Kingston. Each team has its mandate and, collectively in the reporting period, have focused on moving offices to be co-located with the Authority; needs assessment and long-term planning for common services; and improved and expanded the radio network for emergency communications to all staff.

C. Cost-saving measures

27. The latest cost-saving actions taken within the secretariat include the introduction of remote interpretation, using state-of-the-art technology. This produced significant savings with respect to the travel and hiring of United Nations interpreters, leading to overall savings on conference servicing costs of approximately 20 per cent, notwithstanding an increase in the number and frequency of meetings. The installation of light emitting diode (LED) lighting fixtures in the secretariat building generated additional savings on energy costs (see ISBA/24/FC/3). The secretariat is exploring the potential for further cost savings in the areas of travel procurement and records management.

VIII. Financial matters

A. Budget

28. At its twenty-second session, the Assembly adopted the budget for the financial period 2017–2018 in the amount of $8,408,100 (see ISBA/22/A/7/Rev.1-ISBA/22/C/19/Rev.1 and ISBA/22/A/13).

B. Status of contributions

29. In accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, the administrative expenses of the Authority shall be met by assessed contributions of its members until the Authority has sufficient funds from other sources to meet those expenses. The scale of assessments shall be based on the scale used for the regular budget of the United Nations, adjusted for differences in membership. As at 30 April 2018, 55 per cent of the value of contributions to the 2018 budget due from member States and the European Union had been received, while 30 per cent of the membership of the Authority had fully paid their 2018 assessed contribution amounts.

30. Contributions outstanding from member States for prior periods (1998–2017) amounted to $946,983 as at 30 April 2018. Notices are sent on a regular basis to member States, reminding them of the arrears. In accordance with article 184 of the Convention and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, a member of the Authority which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contribution shall have

no vote if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of financial contribution due from it for the preceding two years. As at 30 April 2018, the following 52 members of the Authority had been in arrears for two years or more: Angola, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

31. As at 31 March 2018, the balance of the working capital fund stood at $589,925 against an approved level of $660,000.

C. Voluntary Trust Fund for the members of the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee

32. The Voluntary Trust Fund for the participation of members of the Finance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission from developing countries was established in 2002. Provisional terms and conditions for the use of the Fund were adopted by the Assembly in 2003 and amended in 2004 (see ISBA/9/A/5-ISBA/9/C/5, para. 6 and annex, and ISBA/9/A/9, para. 14) and in 2017 (see ISBA/23/A/8-ISBA/23/C/10, section XI and annex). The Fund is made up of voluntary contributions. As at 30 April 2018, the total contributions to the Fund over its lifetime amount to $700,570. Thus far in 2018, contributions were made by Argentina ($5,000), China ($20,000) and the United Kingdom ($13,969). As at 30 April 2018, the balance of the Fund was $12,357.

D. Voluntary Trust Fund for the members of the Council

33. At its twenty-third session, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a Voluntary Trust Fund to support the participation of members of the Council from developing States (see ISBA/23/A/13). As at 30 April 2018, the total contributions to the fund amounted to $80,000, from Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, UK Seabed Resource Development Ltd, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. and Ocean Mineral Singapore PTE Ltd ($20,000 each). As at 9 May 2018, the balance of the Fund was $72,527.

E. Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area

34. The Assembly established the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area in 2006 (see ISBA/12/A/11). Detailed rules and procedures for the administration and utilization of the Fund were adopted in 2007 (see ISBA/13/A/6, annex). The Fund aims to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole, in particular by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes, including through training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. The Fund is administered by the secretariat. Members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations and private persons may make contributions to the Fund.

35. As at 31 April 2018, the capital of the Fund stood at $3,478,315. At the same date, a total amount of $550,076 had been disbursed from the interest accrued on the capital in the form of awards for projects. The most recent, and sole, contribution to the Fund during 2018 was made by the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer) in February 2018 in the amount of $5,000. Over the past three years, total contributions to the Fund amounted to $22,777. Over the same period, the Fund generated interest of $126,048, and expenditures were $84,380.

IX. Satya N. Nandan Library

36. The Satya N. Nandan Library, named after the first Secretary-General of the Authority, is the main information resource for the secretariat, members of the Authority, permanent missions and other researchers seeking specialist information on the law of the sea, ocean affairs, deep seabed mining and seabed resources. Its principal objective is to service the reference and research needs of its clientele and to provide essential support for the work of the secretariat. The Authority is committed to developing the specialized research capability of the existing collection through an acquisitions programme aimed at responding to the changes in the delivery and formats of information and knowledge, building on and strengthening the Library's comprehensive collection.

37. Work is ongoing on modernization and improved library technologies, collaborations and shared services, and online repositories. The objective is to strengthen infrastructure and services to help to lower the cost of providing scientific and legal information and to position the library as a high-quality research centre. In 2017, a new library management system was implemented using a commercially available digital cloud system. This enables the exploration of library materials using an online public access catalogue, bringing together print and digital publications, articles and web resources. Following software deployment and training, the library catalogue and system were made available and can be accessed at the computer terminals in the Library.

38. The library facilities available to visitors, including conference delegates, consist of a reading room with access to the collection for reference purposes and computer terminals for email and Internet usage. Library services include the provision of information, reference and research support and resources, as well as the distribution of the official documents and publications of the Authority. The Library is an active member of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centres and the Library and Information Association of Jamaica. The library continues to strengthen its collaboration with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and is a partner in the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium. This is a system-wide United Nations consortium that generates considerable savings for participating agencies and continues to be beneficial to both agencies.

39. The Library continues its regular acquisition programme to develop the collection. During the reporting period, the holdings were further augmented by generous donations from organizations and individuals. Donors included: the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; the United Nations Environment Programme; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the United Nations Development Programme; the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the International Maritime Organization; the UNESCO; the World Bank; the Korean Society of Oceanography;

the Polish Geological Institute; Springer Nature publishing company; Tokyo Institute of Technology; Interoceanmetal Joint Organization; the Center for Oceans Law and Policy of the University of Virginia; the Law of the Sea Institute at the University of California, Berkeley; the United States Institute of Peace; the Planning Institute of Jamaica; and the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology of Jamaica. Individual donations were also received from Philomene Verlaan, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, United States of America; Malcolm Clarke, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, New Zealand; Edwin Egede, Cardiff University, United Kingdom; and Kaiser DeSouza, Economic Commission for Africa. The Secretary-General is grateful to all who supported the library during the reporting period.

40. The Library receives numerous requests for research assistance, many of which reflect the increasing interest in the work of the Authority. The main focus is on the activities of the Authority, its structure, functions and future challenges, including work on the regulatory framework for seabed mining and information on fellowships and training opportunities.

X. Communications and information technology services, website and public information and outreach

A. Communications and information technology services

41. The Communications and Information Technology Service unit within the Office for Administrative Services supports the substantive work of the secretariat by administering the communications and information technology infrastructure and services and by providing technical support and training to staff members. The unit also provides support to conference services and to delegates.

42. The Secretary-General, as part of an improved governance structure to oversee the implementation and review of the communications and information technology plan and the evaluation and monitoring of other major projects of the Authority, established a Communications and Information Technology Steering Committee in October 2017 (see ISBA/ST/SGB/2017/8). The Steering Committee, consisting of senior personnel from each functional unit, has met twice during the reporting period, considered the biennial budget for all communications and information technology matters and reviewed the implementation of major projects in that area. In addition to monitoring the provision of and support for information and information technology infrastructure and services, a focus area of the Steering Committee will be on the assessment and management of risk across the communications and information technology functions, in particular disaster management and recovery plans and cybersecurity.

B. Website and public information

43. The Authority continues to maintain an online presence through its main website, providing access to general information, official documents and digital publications on a cross-browser platform. It also maintains a mobile app, ISBA-HQ, that is accessible through any mobile device or tablet and features snapshots of the functions of the Authority, its members and information about the membership of the organs of the Authority, as well as a newsfeed and access to e-book publications.

C. Outreach

44. In April 2018, the Authority participated in the Offshore Technology Conference, held in Houston, Texas, United States of America, in the capacity of the invited organization. In addition to an exhibition booth highlighting the work of the Authority and its contractors, the Authority also hosted a discussion panel on "Progress and prospects in deep sea mining — 50 years on".

45. In May 2018, the Authority exhibited at the "Long Night of the Consulates" event, hosted by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, Germany, and highlighting the relationship between the Tribunal and the Authority alongside the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

46. Other outreach tools include a quarterly newsletter, available by digital subscription, as well as social media on Twitter (@ISBAHQ) and Facebook. These are used to inform members and the public of the Authority's work and joint efforts with other organizations. The Authority also regularly issues briefing papers and technical studies summarizing legal and technical scientific workshops and seminars hosted by the Authority or jointly coordinated with other legal and scientific institutions.

XI. Relationship with the United Nations and other relevant international organizations and bodies

A. United Nations

47. The Authority actively contributed to the work and discussions of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017. On that occasion, the Authority registered a series of voluntary commitments with a view to (a) enhancing the role of women in marine scientific research through capacity-building; (b) encouraging dissemination of research results through the Authority Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research; (c) improving the assessment of essential ecological functions of the deep sea oceans through long-term underwater oceanographic observatories in the Area; and (d) enhancing deep sea marine biodiversity assessment through the creation of online taxonomic atlases linked to deep mining activities in the Area. Additional voluntary commitments were registered in partnership with other agencies, notably with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (on the abyssal initiative for Blue Growth: advancing Sustainable Development Goal 14 and the quest for a Blue Economy through the promotion of socioeconomic benefits for developing countries, including small island developing States, and increasing scientific knowledge and research capacity) and with the African Minerals Development Centre (on fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support to Africa's Blue Economy and mapping the Blue Economy of Africa to support decision-making, investment and governance of activities undertaken on the extended continental shelf and in adjacent international seabed areas).

48. The Authority has taken action to launch the implementation of these voluntary commitments. For instance, on 22 March 2018, in partnership with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing

Countries and Small Island Developing States, the Authority co-hosted a joint side event on the margins of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This side event, entitled "Enhancing the role of women in deep sea scientific research to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development by vulnerable countries", was aimed at raising awareness among vulnerable countries and discussing ways and means of improving access to deep-sea marine scientific research for women from developing countries.

49. The Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research was launched in November 2017, following the publication of guidelines for the award (ISBA/ST/SGB/2017/6) and the appointment in August 2017 of an advisory committee of internationally recognized experts in the field of deep-sea science, social sciences and humanities with experience in the law of the sea, international law or management of marine resources. The members of the advisory committee, who will serve for a period of 3 years are Annick de Marffy-Mantuano, Biliana Cicin-Sain, Chunhui Tao, David Billet and Lawrence Folajimi Awosika. Nine nominations were received for the inaugural edition of the award. The name of the winner will be announced during the twenty-fourth session of the Assembly.

50. Important progress has been made in the establishment of long-term underwater oceanographic observatories in the Area and in the enhancement of deep sea marine biodiversity assessment through the creation of online taxonomic atlases. It is expected that these two distinct voluntary commitments will be implemented by 2018 or early 2019.

51. In cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Pacific Community, the Authority will organize, in November 2018 in Tonga, a consultation workshop with officials of Pacific small island developing States to make progress on the implementation of the abyssal initiative for Blue Growth project. The implementation of the voluntary commitment established of fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources in support to Africa's Blue Economy, launched in partnership with the African Minerals Development Centre of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, will begin with the organization of a workshop to be held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in October 2018.

B. UN-Oceans

52. UN-Oceans is a United Nations inter-agency mechanism mandated to strengthen and promote the coordination and coherence of United Nations systems and activities related to ocean and coastal areas; regularly share information about the ongoing and planned activities of participating organizations within the framework of relevant United Nations and other mandates, with a view to identifying possible areas for collaboration and synergy; facilitate, as appropriate, inputs by its participating organizations to the annual reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on oceans and the law of the sea; and facilitate interagency information exchange, including the sharing of experiences, best practices, tools and methodologies and lessons learned in ocean-related matters.

53. The secretariat of the Authority is a member of UN-Oceans and participates in its meetings, as appropriate, and in accordance with its mandate. During the reporting period, the secretariat participated in a number of teleconferences and contributed to discussions on the indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (c) on enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and as recalled in paragraph 158 of General Assembly resolution 66/288, entitled

"The future we want". The secretariat also participated in the seventeenth face-to-face meeting of UN-Oceans at the headquarters of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, in Paris.

C. International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

54. Since its inception, the Authority has enjoyed a harmonious working relationship with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. On 4 December 2017, at the office of the Permanent Observer for the Authority to the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the Deputy to the Secretary-General met with the incoming President and the Registrar of the Tribunal for informal discussions on matters of mutual interest, in particular general administrative and staffing matters. Given that the informal meeting was the first such meeting since 2014, both institutions welcomed the resumption of these series of informal annual meetings. Information was exchanged on recent activities and discussions took place on, among other issues, opportunities for the organization of joint seminars and issues related to the implementation of the ICSC revised compensation package, ongoing implementation of the 2014 memorandum of agreement to form a partnership for the acquisition of electronic resources through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium (see section IX).

D. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

55. In a joint meeting held on 27 March 2018, both secretariats discussed common activities to implement the existing memorandum of understanding. Both entities agreed to exchange seafloor bathymetric information to contribute to Seabed 2030. Once the database of the Authority will be fully functional, further exchange of information will take place, in particular with the Ocean Biogeographic Information System database of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. Among other cooperation activities, on 16 April 2018, the secretariat participated at a side event organized by the Commission and co-sponsored by the Governments of Belgium and Nauru, during the organizational meeting of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

56. In May 2017, the Authority was invited by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission to co-develop the conception of and proposal for the International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. In February 2018, moving to the design phase, the Commission invited the Authority to be an integral part of the preparation process. Subsequently, in March 2018 the International Seabed Authority and Commission teams reviewed further ways and means of joint cooperation to advance the design of the Decade of Ocean Science, incorporating the Authority into the planning group that the Commission's Council expects to establish in July 2018.

E. International Maritime Organization and the World Maritime University

57. During the reporting period the Authority increased substantially dialogue and cooperation with IMO as part of the implementation of the 2016 cooperation

agreement concluded between both organizations. It was also necessary to explore the applicable legal and institutional frameworks of both organizations in connection with the ongoing development of draft exploitation regulations. In this connection, an informal meeting took place with the Office for the London Convention/Protocol and Ocean Affairs of the Marine Environment Division to exchange information on recent activities and institutional best practices. In addition, IMO invited the Authority to consider joining the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (see paras. 59–62 below) as a sponsoring organization. An informal meeting was also held with the Director of the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds for a general exchange of views on the work of both entities.

58. On 14 February 2018, the Secretary-General paid a courtesy visit to the Secretary-General of IMO. The occasion offered a good opportunity for both to exchange general views on the work of both institutions. The Secretary-General of the Authority described the ongoing process of regulatory development and the need to understand each organization's legal and institutional functions and responsibilities in the context of issues related to activities in the Area and maritime transportation of the ore recovered from the Area. It was proposed to organize a joint meeting between the legal and scientific and technical teams of both organizations to discuss the matter. The Secretary-General of IMO offered to host such a meeting, which was scheduled to take place in June 2018. The Secretary-General of the Authority and the Legal Counsel also met informally with the Director of the Legal Affairs and External Relations Division of IMO to exchange views on general legal and institutional matters.

59. In May 2018, the Secretary-General of the Authority participated, along with the Secretary-General of IMO, the President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Isabelle Lovin, in the Global Ocean Conference of the World Maritime University, held on 8 and 9 May 2018 in Malmo, Sweden. At the Conference, the World Maritime University-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute was inaugurated. The Secretary-General and the President of the World Maritime University held informal discussions on a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions, which is being developed further at the secretariat level.

F. Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection

60. The Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection is an advisory body, established in 1969, that provides independent advice to the United Nations system on the scientific aspects of marine environmental protection. The Joint Group of Experts acts as a mechanism for coordination and collaboration among the sponsoring organizations. Its functions are to conduct and support marine environmental assessments, to undertake in-depth studies, analyses and reviews of specific topics and to identify emerging issues regarding the state of the marine environment. At present the Joint Group of Experts is jointly sponsored by nine United Nations entities. The United Nations sponsors are: IMO, FAO, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

61. Based on the invitation addressed to the Authority by IMO, the secretariat finalized the necessary procedures for the Authority to become the tenth sponsoring organization of the Joint Group of Experts. The Secretary-General appointed the

Director of the Office of Environmental Management and Mineral Resources as the Authority's technical secretary participating in the Joint Group's Executive Committee. By joining the Joint Group, the different organs of the Authority will benefit in terms of enhanced scientific cooperation and expert advice in matters relating to the protection of the marine environment. In particular, the members of the Joint Group of Experts could potentially assist the Legal and Technical Commission in the exercise of its functions by providing options for consulting experts[2] and in making recommendations to the Council on the protection of the marine environment, taking into account the views of recognized experts in that field.[3]

62. The primary functions of the Executive Committee are to plan and approve the Joint Group's budget and work plan, select members of the Joint Group from the pool of experts, propose provisional agendas for Joint Group sessions and adopt terms of reference for its working groups.

63. Currently, the Joint Group's working group 42 is working on the impacts of wastes and other matter in the marine environment from mining operations. This subject is of relevance to the work of the Authority in the area. The objective of that working group is to provide independent advice on what environmental impacts could arise from both land-based tailings and marine minerals mining wastes. The outcomes will be made public by the Joint Group in the form of a report.

G. International Cable Protection Committee

64. In February 2018, the Secretary-General and the Deputy to the Secretary-General met informally with the Chairman of the International Cable Protection Committee and the International Cable Law Adviser. The objective of the informal meeting was to discuss the preparation of a second workshop on deep seabed mining and submarine cables, which is likely to be held in late October 2018. Additionally, the meeting gave the opportunity to both entities to discuss general issues of mutual interest. Both entities were of the view that the informal encounter served to further implement the memorandum of understanding concluded in 2010.

H. OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic

65. The secretariat of the Authority and the secretariat of the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic have cooperated over the years, exchanging information on matters of mutual interest on the basis of the 2011 memorandum of understanding between the two organizations.

66. In March 2018, the secretariat was invited by the OSPAR Commission and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission to participate in the fourth meeting under the collective arrangement for the management of selected areas in the north-east Atlantic, jointly organized by the two Commissions, held on 7 and 8 May at the Ministry of Fisheries, Berlin. Although the secretariat was unable to participate in this meeting, it was able to send, for the second year in a row, a written statement for its circulation at that meeting. This time, the written statement focused on the report of the Secretary-General to the Council outlining a preliminary strategy for the development of regional environmental management plans in parts of the Area where there are currently contracts for exploration (ISBA/24/C/3). It was also suggested that the Authority's upcoming international workshop on developing a framework for

[2] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, article 163(13).

[3] Ibid., article 165(2)(e).

regional environmental management plans for polymetallic sulphides deposits in mid-ocean ridges represented a good opportunity for the two Commissions to contribute to these processes under the auspices of the Authority with available environmental data and scientific analyses. It was also highlighted that the OSPAR contribution on exchange of information would also serve to further implement the objectives reflected in the 2011 memorandum of understanding on issues related to inter-agency cooperation, information exchange and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research.

I. Relationship with other organizations

67. The Authority participated as an observer at the Convention on Biological Diversity expert workshop to develop options for modifying the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, for describing new areas and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of this process, which was held in Berlin, from 5 to 8 December 2017. As a follow-up to the workshop, the secretariat was invited by the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat to participate in the peer review process concerning the report of the expert workshop to support the preparation of the relevant document for the 22nd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. The secretariat submitted comments emphasizing its role as the competent international organization in relation the Area, in accordance with part XI of the Convention. Regrettably, those comments were not reflected in the official Subsidiary Body note prepared by the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat, containing an annex with options for modifying the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, for describing new areas and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of the process. According to the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat, a separate information document will be issued in the coming weeks with the contributions submitted during the peer review, including that made by the Authority's secretariat.

XII. Relations with the host country

68. The secretariat enjoys an excellent and cordial working relationship with the host country. During the period covered by the present report, meetings were organized between the Secretary-General and Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, to discuss matters of common interest, including issues relating to the condition of the secretariat building and the implications for the Authority of the proposed relocation of the United Nations agencies present in Jamaica to the building currently occupied by the Authority.

XIII. Previous session of the Authority

A. Implementation of the decision of the Assembly relating to the final report on the first periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

69. At its twenty-third session, the Assembly approved the final report on the periodic review of the Authority pursuant to article 154 of the Convention (see ISBA/23/A/13). At the same time, a number of requests were addressed to the Secretary-General in connection with the implementation of the decision of the

Assembly pertaining to the final report of the review committee. The following requests were actioned during the reporting period: the revised meeting schedule endorsed by the Assembly was implemented for 2018, with additional meetings being facilitated from within existing budgetary resources; a voluntary trust fund has been set up to defray the costs of participation of Council members from developing countries(see section VIII.C above), and the secretariat continues to update national laws relating to activities in the Area (see section XV.C).

70. Other requests made by the Assembly are being addressed by the secretariat as appropriate. These include carrying out a comparative study of existing national laws before the end of 2018; making progress on the implementation of the database; the continued review of staffing requirements within the secretariat; the focus on development and performance of staff; and, in collaboration with the Legal and Technical Commission, the review of and improvements to the annual contractor reporting process. Additionally, the Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to enhance coordination and cooperation with other relevant international organizations and stakeholders(see section XI above) and to consider ways to engage more extensively with the scientific community.

B. Strategic plan for the Authority for the five-year period 2019–2023

71. Following the request made by member States at the twenty-third session (see ISBA/23/A/13), a draft strategic plan for the Authority for the period 2019–2023 has been prepared for consideration by the Assembly at its twenty-fourth session.

72. Preparatory work for the draft strategic plan included consultation with the permanent representatives to the Authority in Kingston and an open briefing to members of the Authority at United Nations Headquarters in New York. A first draft of a strategic plan was presented in February 2018 in English and French, the two working languages of the Authority. As part of the consultation efforts of the Secretary-General, an open informal briefing took place on 7 March 2018 on the margins of the first part of the session of the Council. This briefing was open to members of the Authority and those observers present in Kingston. Several suggestions and comments were made on that occasion.

73. From 12 March to 27 April 2018, the draft strategic plan was opened for consultation to members of the Authority and stakeholders. A total of 23 submissions were received from members of the Authority (15), observers (4), contractors (3) and an individual (1). The Secretary-General has revised the draft strategic plan, taking into account the suggestions and comments made during the consultation period and at the various meetings and briefing sessions. The plan, as revised, is presented for consideration and adoption by the Assembly (see ISBA/24/A/4).

C. Twenty-third session

74. The twenty-third session of the Authority was held in Kingston from 8 to 18 August 2017. The Assembly held its 162nd to 170th meetings and elected Eugénio João Muianga (Mozambique) as its President. During the session, the Assembly considered and debated the annual report of the Secretary-General of the Authority, submitted in accordance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention (see ISBA/23/A/2 and a summary of the debate in ISBA/23/A/14). The Assembly considered the final report of the Review Committee established to oversee the implementation of the Convention under article 154 (see ISBA/23/A/3) and adopted a decision on the final report and recommendations of the Review Committee (see ISBA/23/A/13 and a summary of the debate in ISBA/23/A/14). Acting on the

recommendations of the Council, the Assembly adopted, respectively, a decision on amendments of the staff regulations of the Authority (see ISBA/23/A/11) and a decision on financial and budgetary matters (see ISBA/23/A/12).

75. The Council held its 223rd to 230th meetings and elected Ariel Fernández (Argentina) as its President. During the session, the Council took note of the report on the status of contracts for exploration in the Area (see ISBA/23/C/7), the report on the status of national legislation relating to deep seabed mining (see ISBA/23/C/6) and the report on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2016 relating to the summary report of the Chair of the Commission (see ISBA/23/C/8). Acting on the recommendation of the Commission, the Council approved an application for the approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides submitted by the Government of Poland and requested the Secretary-General to issue the plan of work in the form of a contract between the Authority and the Government of Poland (see ISBA/23/C/11). Also acting on the recommendation of the Commission, the Council approved the application for a five-year extension of the contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules submitted by the Government of India (see ISBA/23/C/15). The Council considered the summary report of the Chair of the Commission on the work of the Commission during the twenty-third session (ISBA/23/C/13) and adopted a decision relating to that report (ISBA/23/C/18). During the consideration of the draft exploitation regulations, the Council welcomed the continued work of the secretariat and the Commission in this respect and requested the work on draft regulations to continue as a matter of priority. The Council also welcomed the circulation of the draft regulations to stakeholders and encouraged them to make submissions no later than 31 December 2017. The Council requested that the revised draft regulations be circulated in sufficient advance to allow for substantive consideration and discussion by the Council at its next session (see ISBA/23/C/18). Acting on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Council adopted a decision relating to financial and budgetary matters (see ISBA/23/C/17). The Council considered proposed amendments to the staff regulations of the Authority and decided to adopt and apply provisionally the proposed amendments (see ISBA/23/C/4 and ISBA/23/C/16, annex).

D. First part of the twenty-fourth session of the Authority

76. Owing to the increased workload of the Authority, the Assembly endorsed a revised schedule of meetings for 2018 and 2019 (ISBA/23/A/13, sect. D, para. 1). Accordingly, the Council held 10 meetings from 5 to 9 March 2018, immediately prior to the two-week session of the Legal and Technical Commission. The second part of the session will be held from 16 to 20 July 2018, after the meetings of the Commission and before the meetings of the Assembly.

77. The Council elected Olav Myklebust (Norway) as President of the Council for the twenty-fourth session. Subsequently, following consultations among the regional groups, the Council elected the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire (African States), India (Asia-Pacific States), Poland (Eastern European States) and Brazil (Latin American and Caribbean States) as Vice-Presidents.

78. The Council elected Ahmed Farouk (Egypt) to fill a vacancy on the Legal and Technical Commission. The Council also approved the memorandum of understanding between the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization and the Authority, which sets out the areas for cooperation between the two organizations. The Council also took note of reports on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2017 relating to the summary report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission and endorsed a more coherent strategy for the development of regional environmental management plans. The Council also met in an informal setting to

provide guidance to the Commission in relation to the development of the regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. The statement of the President on the work of the Council during March 2018 is contained in document ISBA/24/C/8.

XIV. Ongoing supervision of contracts for exploration and award of new contracts as necessary

79. At the core of the Authority's functions, as the organization through which States parties to the Convention administer the resources of the Area, is the responsibility to approve and issue contracts to qualified entities wishing to explore for or exploit deep-sea mineral resources. The contractual nature of the relationship between the Authority and those wishing to conduct activities in the Area is fundamental to the legal regime established by Part XI of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Annex III to the Convention, in which the "Basic conditions of prospecting, exploration and exploitation" are set out, also forms an integral part of that legal regime, which is further elaborated in the rules, regulations and procedures adopted by the Authority.

A. Status of contracts for exploration

80. As at 30 April 2018, 29 contracts for exploration had entered into force (17 for polymetallic nodules, 7 for polymetallic sulphides and 5 for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts). This includes two new contracts. A contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides with the Government of Poland came into force on 11 February 2018, and a contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts was signed with the Government of the Republic of Korea on 27 March 2018.

81. Following the decision of the Council to approve a five-year extension of the contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules with the Government of India (ISBA/23/C/15), the extension agreement was signed in Kingston on 27 March 2018.

B. Status of annual reports submitted by the contractors

82. Each contractor is required to submit an annual report to the Secretary-General within 90 days of the end of each calendar year, covering its programme of activities in the exploration area. As at 30 April 2018, the full complement of 27 expected annual reports had been received by the secretariat.

C. Informal meeting of the contractors

83. In continuation of a practice started from 2017, the Secretary-General intends to convene an informal meeting of contractors during 2018, most likely in September. The purposes of the meeting will include updating the contractors on the new database of the Authority and holding informal exchanges on other matters of concern, including the status of the development of the regulatory framework for the exploitation of mineral resources.

XV. Progressive development of the regulatory regime for activities in the Area

84. The Authority's mandate includes the continued development of a regulatory regime governing the exploration for and exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, consistent with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement, which provides adequate security of tenure, the development of the common heritage of mankind on the basis of sound commercial principles and ensuring effective protection for the marine environment. The regulatory regime would ultimately be contained in a mining code, which would comprise the whole of the comprehensive set of rules, regulations and procedures issued by the Authority to regulate the prospecting, exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, including applicable standards, and technical and administrative guidelines issued by the Authority.

A. Prospecting and exploration

85. There are currently three sets of regulations covering prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules (ISBA/19/C/17, annex), polymetallic sulphides (ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex) and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (ISBA/18/A/11, annex). In addition to specifying the application process for the approval of a plan of work for exploration, the regulations set out the standard terms and conditions, applicable to all entities, of contracts for exploration concluded with the Authority.

86. The regulations are supplemented by recommendations for the guidance of contractors issued by the Legal and Technical Commission. At present, recommendations that have been issued by the Commission include:

(a) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States relating to training programmes under plans of work for exploration (ISBA/19/LTC/14);

(b) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area (ISBA/19/LTC/8);

(c) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the reporting of actual and direct exploration expenditure (ISBA/21/LTC/11); and

(d) Recommendations for the guidance of contractors on the content, format and structure of annual reports (ISBA/21/LTC/15).

87. The recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area is currently under review by a working group in the Commission. A revised document will be presented by the working group for consideration by the Commission in July 2018 (see ISBA/24/C/9).

B. Exploitation

88. It is recalled that in August 2017 the secretariat issued a set of draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area (see ISBA/23/C/12) for stakeholder comment. The consolidated draft regulations were built on a first working draft issued by the Legal and Technical Commission in July 2016 and incorporated provisions relating to the protection of the marine environment, inspection and regulations for the calculation and administration of a royalty liability. During the final quarter of 2017, the secretariat engaged experts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to

develop a working financial and economic model for the Authority in connection with the development of financial terms for future exploitation contracts.

89. During the first part of the twenty-fourth session, in March 2018, the Council met in an informal setting to consider an informal briefing note prepared by the secretariat on submissions by members of the Authority and other stakeholders in relation to the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and to advance its first substantive discussion on the draft exploitation regulations, including financial terms. This discussion benefited from a workshop hosted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom and the Royal Society, held in London on 12 and 13 February 2018, which addressed a number of common themes arising from submissions to the draft regulations. The Council requested the Legal and Technical Commission to address a number of points and actions during its meetings in 2018 (see ISBA/24/C/8).

90. At its meetings in March 2018, the Commission considered the requests made by the Council together with submissions made by members of the Authority and other stakeholders with respect to the draft exploitation regulations (see ISBA/24/C/9). The Commission requested that the secretariat prepare a revised text of the draft regulations for its consideration in July 2018 in the light of discussions held in the Commission. A revised text has been made available as a working paper as document ISBA/24/LTC/WP.1. A commentary for the benefit of the Commission, members of the Authority and other stakeholders has been issued as document ISBA/24/LTC/6.

91. The Council also requested that the Commission collaborate with the Finance Committee and make recommendations to the Council on the respective roles and responsibilities of the Commission and the Committee in order to facilitate cooperation in the development of the draft regulations, in particular the payment mechanism and, more specifically, administrative fees, and the development of equitable sharing criteria. A joint meeting between the Commission and the Council will be held on 13 July 2018. To aid in that discussion, the secretariat has produced a note to clarify the functions of the respective organs of the Authority in relation to the preparation of rules, regulations and procedures on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area and in relation to the system of compensation envisaged under article 151 (10) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (ISBA/24/C/10).

C. National laws and regulations relating to deep seabed mining

92. At the seventeenth session of the Authority, in 2011, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the laws, regulations and administrative measures adopted by sponsoring States and other members of the Authority with regard to activities in the Area, and invited, for that purpose, sponsoring States and other members of the Authority, as appropriate, to provide the secretariat with information on, or the texts of, relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures (see ISBA/17/C/20, para. 3). Subsequently, the secretariat established an online database of the information on, or the texts of, national laws, regulations and administrative measures that had been submitted to it and submitted an annual report on the status of such national legislation to the Council (ISBA/18/C/8 and Add.1, ISBA/20/C/12, ISBA/20/C/11 and Corr.1 and Add.1, ISBA/21/C/7, ISBA/22/C/8 and ISBA/23/C/6).

93. On 26 March 2018, the secretariat circulated a note verbale inviting sponsoring States and other members of the Authority to submit to the secretariat texts of their relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures or related

information. In response to that note, Tuvalu submitted the Tuvalu Seabed Minerals Act 2014. China submitted three regulatory documents issued by the State Oceanic Administration relating to exploration activities in the Area. Montenegro provided some legislation relating to law of the sea matters.

94. As at 31 May 2018, the following 29 States had provided information on, or the texts of, relevant national laws, regulations and administrative measures: Belgium, Brazil, China, Cook Islands, Cuba, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Fiji, France, Georgia, Germany, Guyana, India, Japan, Kiribati, Mexico, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Niue, Oman, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America and Zambia. A submission was also received from the secretariat of the Pacific Community.

XVI. Promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research in the Area

95. The promotion of marine scientific research with respect to activities in the Area, with particular emphasis on research related to the environmental impact of activities in the Area, is a key focus area for the Authority. The Authority has engaged in several international initiatives as a partner in support of marine scientific research.

96. In February 2017, the Office of Environmental Management and Mineral Resources of the secretariat participated in the second Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans) MiningImpact meeting, held in Bremen, Germany, on the theme "Ecological Aspects of Deep-Sea Mining". JPI Oceans is funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. The Authority has become an official partner of the JPI Oceans MiningImpact project.

97. In September 2017, the Authority organized a workshop in Berlin in collaboration with the International Marine Minerals Society and the Pew Environment Group. The workshop dealt with the definition and use of area-based management tools for environmental assessment during exploitation as required in the regulations for each of the three minerals. The regulations foresee the design of impact reference zones and preservation reference zones prior to exploitation. The workshop brought together contractors and stakeholders to provide recommendations to the Legal and Technical Commission to help in their design.

98. From October 2017, the secretariat engaged in the organization of a scientific cruise entitled "Plumex" with R/V Sally Ride off the shores of California, United States of America, to study experimental plume releases. This cruise took place in March 2018 and was organized by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, JPI Oceans, and the Belgian contractor GSR in collaboration with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego. The secretariat also engaged with the University of Hawaii and the International Atomic Energy Agency in a collaborative effort to implement a long-term monitoring system in the area, specifically in the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. This initiative forms the core of a voluntary commitment for the sustainable development goals of UN-Oceans.

99. It is understood that processing technologies can cost up to 70 per cent of a total seabed mining project, thus having a major impact on the economic feasibility of deep-sea mining. A workshop on processing technologies, metal recoveries and their impact on the economic feasibility of deep-sea mining has been proposed and is to be held in Poland in September 2018, in collaboration with Interoceanmetal Joint Organization and the Polish Ministry of Environment.

XVII. Regional environmental management plans

100. The Council adopted the first-ever environmental management plan for the Area in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in 2012.[4] This process included the designation of a network of nine areas of particular environmental interest through a collaborative process involving relevant stakeholders. Since 2012, the Council has repeatedly called upon the secretariat and the Legal and Technical Commission to make progress on the development of similar regional environmental management plans in other parts of the Area, in particular where contracts for exploration currently exist.[5] These calls have been reflected in the resolutions of the General Assembly.[6]

101. In March 2018, the Council took note of the preliminary strategy for the development of regional environmental management plans under the auspices of the Authority for key provinces where exploration activities under contracts are carried out.[7] The Council also agreed with the priority areas that had been identified on a preliminary basis as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the Indian Ocean triple junction ridge and nodule-bearing province, as well as the North-west Pacific and South Atlantic for seamounts. The Council also noted that the preliminary strategy laid out a coherent and coordinated approach to the process and identified as essential that plans be developed in a transparent manner under the auspices of the Authority, in the light of its jurisdiction under the Convention and the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention.[8]

102. Implementation of this preliminary strategy has started with the organization of two workshops. The first workshop, organized in collaboration with China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association, will take place in Qingdao, China, in May 2018 and will focus on building a road map for a regional environmental management plan in the cobalt-crust area of the North-west Pacific. The second workshop will take place in Szczecin, Poland, in June 2018 and will address the design of regional environmental management plans for polymetallic sulphides. Meanwhile, during the second half of 2018, a workshop will be held to review the status of implementation of the 2012 environmental management plan established for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone region.

XVIII. Data management strategy

103. The database management programme is currently in phase six of a nine-phase implementation plan. Phase six will see the delivery of a fit-for-purpose database and application interface to store the Authority's digital data. This phase also includes stakeholder training and the production of a database management user manual. The conclusion of phase seven of the implementation plan (integration and acceptance testing) will see the end of active development on the project, with the remaining phases being phase eight (correction and documentation), and phase nine (one-year implementation support). The implementation of the database management programme is expected to be completed in October 2018, with a soft launch of the application to various user groups. In parallel with the launch of the application, the secretariat will initiate the migration and insertion of data from various sources, the most important of which are the historic template data and data that have been

[4] See ISBA/17/LTC/7, ISBA/17/C/19 and ISBA/18/C/22.

[5] See, inter alia, ISBA/20/C/31, para. 9; ISBA/21/C/20, para. 10; ISBA/22/C/28, para. 11; and ISBA/23/C/18, para. 16.

[6] See resolutions 69/245, para. 51; 70/235, para. 60, and 72/73, para. 71.

[7] See ISBA/24/C/3.

[8] See ISBA/24/C/8, para. 10.

extracted from various sources and geo-referenced using geographic information system technology by the secretariat.

104. The secretariat has also initiated work on the evaluation of information and data relating to the areas reserved for the Authority, which will be an important requirement for the future operationalization of the Enterprise. A series of maps have been prepared, which would be compiled as a preliminary atlas and updated periodically.

XIX. Capacity development and training

105. The Authority carries out its mandate of promoting marine scientific research in the Area and building the capacity of developing States in deep-sea research and technology[9] through the Authority's contractor training programmes, its Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area and its internship programme.

A. Contractor training programme

106. Authority contractors have a legal obligation to provide and fund training opportunities for trainees from developing States and the Authority. Between 2013 and 2017, a total of 69 training places were provided by 11 contractors. The types of training included at-sea training; engineering training; fellowship training, including master's and PhD programmes; internships; workshops; and seminars. Among the selected trainees, 26 were from the African group, 22 from the Asia-Pacific group, 2 from the Eastern European group and 19 from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. A total of 22 of the 69 trainees were women.

107. As at 31 May 2018, in the previous year, 21 candidates had been selected for training placements under nine exploration contracts (six from the African group, seven from the Asia-Pacific group, one from the Eastern European group and seven from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States). A total of 11 of the successful candidates were women. All training opportunities are advertised on the Authority's website and are circulated to members of the Authority.

108. If all existing contracts and approved plans of work are implemented according to the recommendations made by the Legal and Technical Commission with respect to training programmes, approximately 200 training places will be made available by contractors between 2017 and 2021.

B. Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area

109. The Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area aims to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole, in particular by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes and offering them opportunities to participate in training, technical assistance and scientific cooperation programmes. Pursuant to the agreed procedures, a new advisory panel was appointed by the Secretary-General in 2017 to evaluate applications for assistance from the Fund and make recommendations to the Secretary-General. The names of the members are listed in the annex to the present report. The panel will serve for a three-year period ending in November 2020.

[9] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, articles 143 and 144.

110. In 2017, with the award of $10,000 from the Endowment Fund, the Second Institute of Oceanography, China, was able to start the preparatory work for the international cooperative study of seafloor sulphides on slow and ultra-slow spreading ridges, to be conducted under the framework of InterRidge, an international scientific collaboration. The project will span two years and is expected to be completed in 2019. In late 2018, an academic workshop, supported by the grant from the Endowment Fund, will be held on resources exploration and assessment of seafloor massive sulphides on slow and ultra-slow spreading ridges. Two young scientists from developing countries will be selected to participate in this project.

111. An award of $8,000 to the Second Institute of Oceanography, China, was used to provide scholarships to seven candidates (from Brazil, Cameroon, India, Kenya, Malaysia and Thailand) to attend the 2017 "Summer academy on deep seabed mining: interaction of science, technology and legal development", convened by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. An award of $4,000 to the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia, enabled two candidates from China to attend the 2017 summer session of the Rhodes Academy. An award of $8,960 allowed InterRidge to offer fellowships to post-doctoral researchers from India and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

112. The fifteenth meeting of the advisory panel was held on 15 March 2018. The funds available for use in 2018 totalled approximately $58,000. The panel recommended awards from the Fund as follows: $12,000 to the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative to support the attendance of postgraduate students and researchers from developing countries to the fifteenth International Deep-Sea Biology Symposium and a Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative workshop to be held from 9 to 14 September 2018 in Monterey, California, United States of America; $5,000 to the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia, for the 2018 session of the Rhodes Academy; $7,500 to Xiamen University, China, for the 2018 summer session of the Marco Polo-Zheng He Academy of Oceans Law and Policy; and $13,000 to Shanghai Jiao Tong University to support its 2018 summer academy.

113. As at 31 May 2018, a total of 126 young scientists or government officials from 45 countries had benefitted from the Fund. The beneficiaries include representatives of all regional groups: the African group (Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tunisia); the Asia-Pacific group (Bangladesh, China, the Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga and Viet Nam); the Eastern European group (Bulgaria and the Russian Federation); the group of Latin American and Caribbean States (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago); the Western European and other States group (Greece, Malta and Norway); and Observer States (Colombia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Peru and Turkey). Of the 126 beneficiaries to date, a total of 47 (or 37.3 per cent) were women.

114. The secretariat will continue to take steps to generate interest in the Endowment Fund on the part of potential donors and institutional partners. It is also noted that, during the twenty-third session, the Council of the Authority, in its decision relating to financial and budgetary matters, strongly encouraged members of the Authority to make voluntary contributions to the fund (ISBA/23/C/17/Rev.1). Regrettably, there has been only one contribution to the Fund since 2016 in the amount of $5,000 from Ifremer on 12 February 2018. The Fund is one of the principal mechanisms for enabling capacity-building in the field of marine scientific research in the deep ocean, and the Secretary-General wishes to encourage members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical

institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and private persons to contribute to it.

C. Internship

115. The purpose of the Authority's internship programme is twofold: (a) to provide a framework through which students and young government officials from diverse academic backgrounds gain exposure to the work and functions of the Authority in order to enhance their educational experience and gain experience in the work of the Authority; and (b) to enable the Authority to benefit from the assistance of qualified students and young government officials specialized in various skills within the scope of activities of the Authority. The Authority accepts interns on a limited basis, depending on the specific needs of respective offices and their capacity to effectively support, accommodate and supervise the interns.

116. As at 31 May 2018, a total of 27 university graduates or governmental officials from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, the Cook Islands, Ecuador, Fiji, France, Germany, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have participated in the internship programme.

117. Interns are responsible, where appropriate, for obtaining the necessary visas and arranging their travel to and from Kingston, as well as accommodation and travel in Kingston. Costs and arrangements for travel, visas, accommodation and living expenses are also the responsibility of the interns or their sponsoring institutions. They are not financially remunerated by the Authority. One consistent and major constraint in providing internships, especially to individuals from developing countries, is that the Authority has no funding to support interns, who must therefore find their own financial support for travel and subsistence. The Secretary-General would welcome any possible extrabudgetary support for the internship programme to benefit individuals from developing countries.

Annex

Members of the advisory panel of the International Seabed Authority Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area

(2017–2020)

Georgy Cherkashov (reappointed)

Deputy Director
Institute for Geology and Mineral Resources of the Ocean, Russian Federation

Tian Qi

Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Jamaica

Jean-Michel Despax (reappointed)

Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of France to Jamaica

Inés Fors Fernández

Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cuba to Jamaica

Janet Omoleegho Olisa

Permanent Representative to the International Seabed Authority and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Jamaica

Dorca Auma Achapa

Head of the International Law Division
Office of the Attorney-General, Kenya

Alan Evans

Marine Science Policy Adviser
National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, United Kingdom